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CIACO NID 81 [REDACTED]

March 25, 1981

SPECIAL ANALYSIS

POLAND: Possible Turning Point

[REDACTED]

Solidarity and the government are on another collision course and will have greater difficulty than ever before in avoiding violence. The chances have increased markedly that the regime will impose martial law even though doing so risks provoking widespread disorder and a military intervention by the Soviets. [REDACTED]

Both sides are talking tough. The harsh party Politburo statement as well as the government's stubbornness during talks with the union on Sunday suggest that the party feels compelled to stand firm in the face of union demands over the incident at Bydgoszcz. [REDACTED]

The union has put the government on the defensive with its propaganda campaign on police brutality. It also has tried to deny the regime its ultimate weapon of a declaration of martial law by moving regional union headquarters into the factories and by making a general strike the automatic response to such an action. [REDACTED]

Solidarity's Position

The incident at Bydgoszcz--following other instances of increased police harassment of Solidarity--has brought to the surface and focused attention on the workers' deep resentment of the repressive activities of the privileged security services. The workers have lost some of their fear of the police, are determined to resist the use of force by the police, and see the incident as a test of their resolve. Union leaders believe that with 10 million members and wider popular support they can stand up to the police and win. [REDACTED]

Solidarity's minimum demands probably are high. Many in the union will not be satisfied with the sacking of a few local policemen in Bydgoszcz and will remain adamant that political officials also be dismissed. [REDACTED]

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Some activists also want broader assurance that harassment of the unions will stop. Solidarity leader Walesa, who prevented wildcat strikes over this issue last week by threatening to resign, may now not have the ability or the inclination to prevent a general strike if the government does not show signs of being responsive.

The Regime's Options

The government probably has adopted a tough stance because it is under great pressure from hardliners and the Soviets to stand firm, and because it may believe Solidarity has exaggerated an incident that was in large measure provoked by union activists. Moreover, it does not want to weaken the security forces, one of its few remaining loyal and effective instruments of power.

The regime could try to strike a limited compromise by blaming local police officers. It also could go much further in meeting Solidarity's demands--or refuse to give in at all. The government probably will try offering a limited compromise first, because this involves the fewest risks, allows it to show a continued commitment to political solutions, and increases its ability to depict Solidarity as the irresponsible party should no compromise be found.

If a compromise is to succeed, however, the authorities will have to try to bring indirect pressure on Solidarity to moderate its demands. This could involve appeals to the Church, hints of martial law, or threats of military force. The Church may refuse to become involved, however, until the government has shown it will act against cases of police brutality.

Some in the regime may be prepared for greater compromise, believing the Soviets still want to avoid military intervention. Consequently, another capitulation by the government cannot be ruled out, even though it might weaken party chief Kania's political standing and severely damage relations with Moscow.

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If the regime decides not to give in, it must be prepared to face a general strike. There would be considerable pressure on the government to preempt or control such a strike by declaring martial law even though any element of surprise is gone. [REDACTED]

Such a course raises the chance of extensive unrest or a total impasse between striking workers and security and military forces. Either prospect could lead the Soviets to intervene. The party leadership nonetheless appears to be much closer to adopting this course than it has been in the past. [REDACTED]

The Soviet Factor

The Soviets probably regard this latest crisis as a pivotal test of the Kania regime's determination to stand firm. Moscow has been urging such a course on Warsaw with increasing forcefulness. [REDACTED]

The Kremlin has drastically narrowed the Polish regime's room for compromise by publicly adopting a hard line on the incident at Bydgoszcz. In past confrontations between Solidarity and the regime, the Soviets have either refrained from direct public comment or broken their silence only after the issue has been decided. [REDACTED]

A "victory" by the government would give Kania's stock a badly needed boost in Moscow. Should the party again give up more than Solidarity, however, Moscow may begin to push for Kania's replacement by someone more willing to take a tougher line. If the regime does not back off and Solidarity continues planning for a general strike, Soviet leaders will put even greater pressure on Warsaw to declare martial law. [REDACTED]

Moscow realizes there is a considerable risk that martial law could lead to uncontrollable violence, which would require direct Soviet military intervention. There is no evidence indicating the Soviets are readying the massive force necessary for an intervention under such chaotic circumstances. Nevertheless, after several months of tactical training and exercises, culminating in Soyuz-81, Soviet forces in and around Poland are more prepared for intervention than at any time since last December. [REDACTED]